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NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS.

Mind and Organism.

Editor of the Journal of Speculative Philosophy :

I have thought for some time that I should like to point out just how Physiology has been at a stand-still ever since the innovation of Haller, about the middle of the last century; how facts have accumulated until they have become a drug in the market; how no progress has been made towards the systemization of them, and how none can be until we repudiate the "*vis in situ*" or the irritability of Haller, and retrace our steps to the old Aristotelian track. The conceptions of vitality that have grown out of this doctrine, such as the vital endowments or properties of nerves, must give place to the simple conceptions of mind and body, of spirit and matter. The purpose of organization must be seen to be to enable the mind to avail itself of the physical properties that grow out of that organization; and not to have, after these physical qualities are attained, superadded to them a series of unknown and unknowable entities which render organization meaningless. Most of the generally accepted doctrines, including even the celebrated one of the sensitive and motor nerves of Bell, now taught in all our schools, can be demonstrated to be erroneous. The abnormal reactions of the nerves, consequent on the mind's employing them in its functions of sensation and motion, are universally mistaken for the causes of sensation and motion: an illusion of the senses which is the counterpart, if not the repetition, in Physiology of that which in Astronomy prevented for centuries the systemization of the motions of the planets. If it is not putting the cart before the horse, it is seeing the cart push the horse instead of being drawn by that animal. It would seem that the multiplied contradictions of Experimental Physiology would have long ere this opened the eyes of the Carpenters and Magendies of the present day to the unphilosophical character of their method. But they only serve to incite them to find fault with the vivisectors. The aim of their science is not to discover a principle which, penetrating the facts of physiology and anatomy, strings them into a systematic and harmonious whole, but they are content to bundle them in parcels, and label them "motor" and "sensitive," "sensitive-motor," "ideo-motor," "reflex," and "inhibitory" nerves, &c. And if, perchance, a fact is discovered empirically which is plainly deducible, from the structure and position of the parts, according to the laws of physics—such an one, for instance, as the crossing of sensation in the spinal marrow announced by Brown-Sequard—all the cocks begin to crow lustily over the wonderful progress of Physiology.

When one is sensible of his own ignorance, he has reached the starting-point towards true knowledge. The greatest bar towards the advancement of Physiological Science is the impression that it is now in a very advanced state. It is too humiliating to be told, when it assumes to dictate to Philosophy and Theology, that it must go back a century and rub out all it has done and begin again. It impoverishes the publisher in feeling, to

learn that much of his capital invested in books is lost. It wounds the pride of the Professor to be called on to revise his lectures which he has stereotyped for the benefit of his pupils, whom he has often congratulated on their good fortune in coming to the surface at a time when so much light has been thrown on the mysteries of life. To tell them that that light in them is darkness, and then to help them find out how great is that darkness, is to swallow his own words. Yet this will have to be done, unpleasant as the task may be, not in the interest of Religion or of Philosophy, but in the interest of Physiology itself.

Rockport, Mass., Jan. 11, 1875.

BENJ. HASKELL, M.D.

Thomas Aquinas.

[The following poem, by Dr. T. W. Parsons, appeared in the *Catholic World*. The accomplished translator of Dante, himself a follower of Thomas Aquinas, quite naturally lives into the spirit of that time and feels the import of the gigantic struggle between the Arabian thinkers and the Christian, of whom Thomas Aquinas was chief. It was a contest between Oriental abstract Monism and European concrete Trinitarianism. The great problem then as now was that of the Person *versus* the Thing or mere animal. If there is no discrete degree between the Thing of Nature and Man, then absorption of the soul and loss of individuality will supervene at death. Pantheism *versus* Christian Theism was on trial. In this contest we find not only the originating cause of scholasticism, but also of the founding of the universities, and the revival of learning, and the emancipation of thought. Christian Theology was obliged to make its dogma justify itself before the intellect, or else succumb to doctrine taught in the Arabian schools. Albertus Magnus, who, like Hegel and Schelling long after him, was born in Suabia, came down to Cologne and Paris, and taught Aristotle in such a way as to reconcile his doctrines with the Christian dogmas. Among his pupils were Meister Eckhart, founder of Teutonic mysticism, and Thomas Aquinas, mightiest of theologians. The former built a system of philosophy on the Trinity as central principle, as did Jacob Boehme after him; the latter stated the Christian Idea so clearly in the language of the Intellect that the development of six hundred years has not superseded his philosophic forms. In fact, his comprehension is confirmed by the profoundest thought of our time. The necessity of a philosophic system that shall make personality its central principle, and exhibit the true difference between the beings of nature and human souls, should revive in our theological seminaries the study of Aquinas. With this study should be combined that of Meister Eckhart, who made his philosophical technique out of the language of the dogma, and was able to think therewith the profoundest thoughts.—EDITOR.]

Turning from Darwin to Thomas Aquinas.

Unless in thought with thee I often live,
 Angelic Doctor! life seems poor to me:
 What *are* these bounties if they only be
 Such boon as farmers to their servants give?
 That I am fed, and that mine oxen thrive,
 That my lambs fatten, that mine hours are free,—
 These ask my nightly thanks on bended knee,